

Fashion Design by TMD Grads
Stephanie Kolanko, TZMD '11 and Jillian Banta, TMD '12
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Summary by Allyson Conway

Seminar was fortunate enough to hear from recent graduates of the TMD department again. There were two guest speakers, Stephanie Kolanko '11, and Jillian Banta '12, both of whom have already begun their successful careers. Being designers, they focused this week's lecture on the art of fashion, and being recent graduates of the TMD department, they were able to explain how certain classes they took at URI have helped them in their careers. They also talked about how influential studying abroad was for them and how it has impacted some choices they have since made.

Stephanie Kolanko spoke first. In addition to her degree in TMD, she also earned a minor in art. She listed a few classes that she took at URI that she says were the most beneficial to her, such as drawing/painting, photography, history of fashion, weaving, design process, CAD, flat pattern making, draping, and floral design. She mentioned that she has a part time job at a florist, so her floral design class has helped her there. As a side note, she pointed out that many graduates may need a part time job on the side while they are first starting out in order to earn enough of an income to keep them afloat until they get their feet firmly on the ground.

Jillian Banta focused her part of the lecture on finding a job upon graduation. During her spring semester of her senior year, she applied to hundreds of jobs before finally being offered and accepted one. She currently works as a jewelry designer for T. Tahari, a branch off of Elie Tahari. She noted that one of her favorite parts about being the jewelry designer for this company is going into Bloomingdale's and seeing her designs in the store.

Both Stephanie and Jillian took part in the TMD department's annual two-week Fashion Study Tour in London and Paris during their time at URI. Stephanie also spent a month in Lyon, France at the Universite de la Mode. Both of these graduates were inspired by their time spent abroad and say how it has helped them get to where they are now in their careers. They encourage students to study abroad, or at least take a trip to another country, because traveling is an important part of designing.

Style Week in January featured designs by both Stephanie and Jillian, and they both brought in a couple of their designs to show the class. Each of them had an excellent experience participating in Style Week and will likely participate again in future events. Even though there is a fee to participate in Style Week, it pays for lights, music, models, and any other expense that might arise that would normally have to be paid for by the designer anyway.

Stephanie and Jillian also have their designs for sale at local consignment shops and online stores such as etsy. They seem to be on the fast track to becoming successful designers, but more importantly they seem to love what they are doing. It is always motivational to hear stories from recent TMD graduates because the class can relate to them on a more personal level.